



WRITING PR

A **MULTIMEDIA** APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION TO KEY CONCEPTS

Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach is a new text for a new age. It is a text for courses in public relations writing and techniques, with an approach solidly grounded in professional practice and creative learning.

The practice of public relations involves persuasive activities, blending both art and science. However, it is the philosophy of this text that success in PR communication will rest on learning to manage ideas as well as technical skills. *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* recognizes this, and will blend important concepts from the fields of English, literature, philosophy, law, aesthetics, history and ethics in the context of today's technologies. Such breadth will encourage students, in turn, to think just as widely about the ideas and challenges that will confront them as professionals in a rapidly changing world.

This text recognizes, too, that technology for public relations students can no longer be treated as a “drop in” subject but must be thoughtfully and fully integrated into the full discussion of the profession. In *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach*, students will gain confidence in their abilities to write across media platforms—skills that are more and more becoming a necessary part of their inventory and knowledge base. While special chapters and sections specifically examine the impact of technology on the contemporary workplace, this book goes further. Virtually all of its chapters will invite students to incorporate technical decisions into the creative process. So, for example, a decision to send a news release by fax, e-mail, “snail mail” or to post it on a Web site is taught as more than just a technical one. It is also a creative decision, one that impacts the design, content, and writing style of the final piece.

Just as *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* will make technology and creative process part of every task, so too will ethics, values and diversity be part of the discussions. In the “Focus” and “Case Study” profiles, students will see more professional variety than in any other current text.

Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach outlines strategies for students to become critical thinkers, using the best of what we know from composition and rhetorical fields and applying it to the professional practice of public relations. So much of the success that public relations practitioners achieve relies upon their relationships with the media. Therefore, the writing in this text primarily follows the Associated Press (AP) style guidelines (although purists will note some deviations that we have adapted to follow a more traditional textbook style). We believe that this approach, in addition to the extended discussions within the text about the importance of AP style, will serve as an important learning tool for students and new professionals alike.

In turn, this text will take the mystery out of good writing in the profession for students at all levels. It shows students how to “invent” ideas, how to arrange them in

logical fashion for the best impact on their readers and how to inject style into what they create. Students of *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* will turn in assignments that will be dynamic, attractive, effective and creative.

KEY FEATURES

At the heart of this text is the conviction that creative processes—brainstorming, experimentation and style—must be part of public relations writing. Another innovation will be interrelated components designed to expose students to the most contemporary “nuts-and-bolts” methods of writing for public relations there are. In mini-sections called *Discussion Questions* and *Concepts to Keep* students will be prodded to think critically about the topics before them in a variety of ways that can be used as classroom exercises or as homework assignments. In *Focus* and *Case Studies*, working professionals in the field will reveal, in an easy-to-read format, how they perform specific aspects of their jobs, and zero in on the not-so-obvious skills they attribute to their successes.

Overall, case studies will look at public relations campaigns, highlighting the tools and tactics involved. Through a unique agreement with *PRWeek* magazine, the co-authors have received permission to select a broad array of contemporary cases from past issues of this leading trade magazine as important supplements to the chapter topics. In these ways, students will gain invaluable insights into the latest, up-to-the minute methods that real practitioners use to get results in today’s workplace. Also, each chapter will include *PR Writing Exercises* at the end of each chapter designed to allow students realistic activities in which to apply what they’ve learned.

Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach offers useful insights through these sections specifically related to the details of writing public relations’ materials—things that students most want to know. Graphically, the “look” of this book has aimed to reflect its own advice by employing a distinctive visual look with a heavy emphasis on such techniques as the use of subheads, bullets and information graphics to help underscore key information and pull the students’ attention through the text.

Finally, as a text designed for the 21st century, *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* incorporates the latest technological innovations as they affect public relations practice. Once again, the comments from working professionals liberally used throughout the text will help give substance and context to descriptions of technology as they are explained within key chapters.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF ROADMAP

Textbooks in general are like giant roadmaps taking students on a complicated journey from one coast to another. On one end of the journey are our student neophytes who have varying skills in writing and varying comfort levels with public relations concepts. On the other end are our professional colleagues who expect us to launch

these same students into the working world with the best, most competitive skills possible. However, the road to excellence for these students zigzags through a dizzying array of assignments and tasks, more complex than they are likely to encounter in any other college-level writing course.

One popular assumption about public relations' writing is that, given enough examples to copy, student writers will perform like professionals. Another assumption is that, loaded up with enough analysis about a specific writing tool they should use (along with a few examples), students will learn to communicate better.

Truthfully, students need a lot more. They need formats to be dissected and explained by their parts as they are learning to put together a whole piece. They need examples—lots of them—that reflect the multicultural and global contexts in which they will operate as professionals. They need mentors, in the voices of real-life people who are doing the work to which they aspire. Students need to become comfortable with technology in relationship to the work they will have to perform.

Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach is a text that aims to be a roadmap of a different kind. Laced with critical thinking tips, vivid examples and expert perspectives, it will connect students to their destinations with point-by-point directions, giving them very clear instructions every step of the way. It never loses sight of the end destination, the other coast. But it will serve as a knowledgeable tour guide along the way, pointing out smarter ways, from the traveler's viewpoint, to navigate from start to end.

Second, good public relations writing emphasizes process as well as product. Professionals have to be sensitive to news and issues around them, while challenging themselves creatively at all times. They learn to ask, Are there new ways to tie into traditional media? Are there new media that offer us different ways of receiving and sending information?

With *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* students will learn to ask, and to answer, such questions routinely as part of their training with this textbook. It includes lots of examples for each project described, enhanced by part-by-part descriptions of the project's structure. This construct reinforces the book's key ideas, reminding students over and over again that successful communication in PR depends upon blending correct form with shrewd understanding of audience needs.

The job market has never been better for students entering the field of public relations. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, jobs in public relations fields should steadily increase from 10 to 20 percent annually until the year 2005 and beyond. Will our students be ready for the enormous challenges and the special opportunities that lie ahead for them? With *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* we believe they will!

ACCOMPANYING APPARATUS

Accompanying *Writing PR: A Multimedia Approach* is a Web site dedicated to this text (www.ablongman.com/carstarphen1e). This site will offer online quizzes and Web sites to accompany all chapters, teaching tips for professors, updated professional pro-

files as innovative practices in PR become known through a link to the *PRWeek* magazine Web site, and links to professional groups in the field, such as PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) and IABC (International Association of Business Communicators).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this textbook has truly been a labor of love and a test of endurance for the authors. Along the way we have been fortified and encouraged by countless individuals, who we want to take time to recognize here.

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One of the most exciting aspects of preparing this text was witnessing how the PR professionals we contacted responded so strongly to our requests to use samples from their practice. Their names and organizations are sprinkled like precious jewels throughout the text and links to their Web sites are provided on the Allyn and Bacon Web site supporting this textbook. Individually, they are far too numerous to mention here, but a few who went “above and beyond” in their assistance to us need special acknowledgment, especially Amy Sandling Crawford, Christy Earl, SHW & Designs, E. Lyle Henderson, Marilyn Gilbert, Danielle Posey, Gus Whitcomb and Tim Kincaid. We especially appreciate the assistance of *PR Week* Editor Lisa Taylor and staffers Louise Morrin and Shannan Miller, without whose support this textbook would be a lesser reflection of our original dream.

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